

Who is at risk for getting plague?

Outbreaks of plague tend to happen in areas where housing and living conditions are dirty. Rats like to live in these areas, and they often carry plague. In the United States, plague is most common in southwestern states like New Mexico and Arizona. However, cases have been found in other parts of the country. Plague outbreaks can happen in country communities or in cities, at any time of year.

How can I learn more about plague?

You can call the **Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Public Health Hot Topic** telephone line at **1-866-866-2769**, or **TTY 1-800-735-2258**.

You can also find information at these Web sites:

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

www.dhmh.state.md.us

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/smallpox



Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., *Governor*

Michael S. Steele, *Lt. Governor*

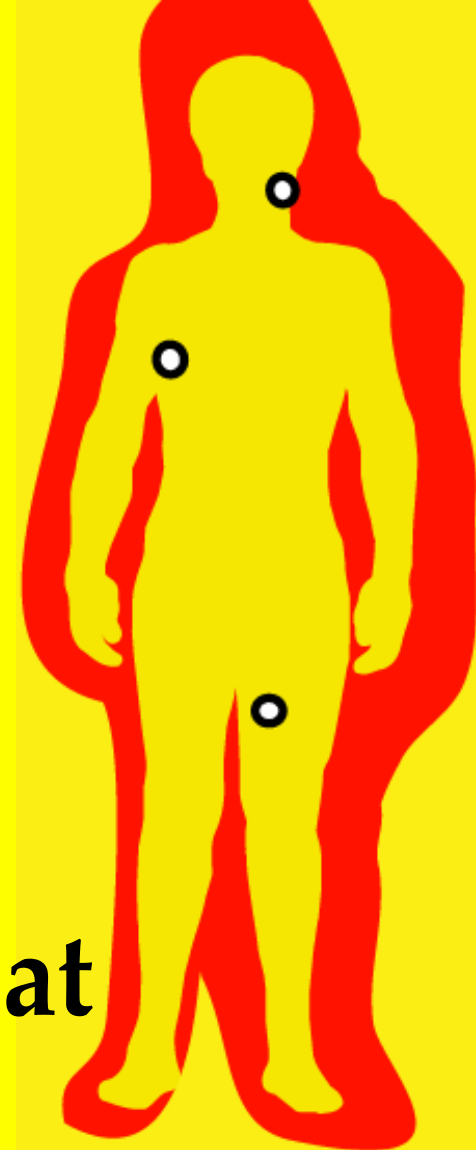
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Plague - English - A

What is Plague?



What is plague?

Plague is a disease caused by a germ found in the blood of animals in the rodent family, like rats and mice. Fleas usually carry the germ. They get it by biting a rodent that is infected. Then the fleas bite other animals and pass on the germ.

What are the signs of plague?

The most common signs of plague are:

- Swollen lymph glands
- Pain
- Chills
- Fever
- Headache
- Extreme tiredness

These signs can also point to other kinds of illness. But if the person has been around infected rats, rabbits or fleas, it could be plague.

How long does it take to see signs of plague?

Signs of plague usually show up two to six days after being infected. Then, the germ enters the bloodstream, where it can spread very quickly. If left untreated, plague can cause a severe and often deadly illness.

The disease can settle in the lungs, causing breathing problems. At this stage, the person might have coughing, chills, fever, and bloody saliva.

One out of seven people who get plague in the United States dies from it.

Can plague move from one person to another?

Yes. When a person with plague illness coughs, tiny droplets of saliva may be released into the air. If another person breathes in those droplets, he or she can be infected.

How is plague treated?

Persons who may have plague are hospitalized and kept away from other patients. Antibiotic drugs are used to treat the illness.

People who have had contact with a person who has plague should see a doctor. They also may need to get treatment.